

Future of Texas is Focus of New Research Challenge

Planet Texas 2050: Planning for a Resilient Texas, a university-wide, interdisciplinary research challenge, will examine the issues of extreme weather events, population growth and aging infrastructure facing Texas.



AUSTIN, Texas – Extreme weather events, population growth and aging infrastructure are common challenges Texas shares with the nation and world. In order to better understand these issues and devise innovative solutions, The University of Texas at Austin will launch Planet Texas 2050: Planning for a Resilient Texas, the first in a series of university-wide, interdisciplinary research challenges.

“The continued growth and development of Texas depends on strategic policies and innovations,” said Gregory L. Fenves, president of UT Austin. “By harnessing the ideas and expertise of UT faculty through the Planet Texas 2050 challenge, we will create knowledge and solutions and educate talented individuals so Texas can be prepared and thrive in the decades ahead.”

The challenge brings together 55 faculty members and researchers spanning 14 colleges and schools across the university. Planet Texas 2050 will explore how Texas will be able to ensure its resilience in the year 2050, in both the built and natural environments, as it faces weather extremes and rapid urbanization. The team will examine these threats through a comprehensive integration of environmental, architectural, archaeological, social and cultural data. The team’s findings will be valuable to other regions of the United States and nations also dealing with the need to manage natural resources in the face of rising populations and extreme weather events.

Planet Texas 2050 research will begin in early 2018.

Its major research goals are:

- A better understanding of the feedback cycles in human-environment interactions.
- Create sophisticated simulations to predict possible futures for Texas.
- Data-driven recommendations for responding positively to such scenarios.

Planet Texas 2050 is part of the Bridging Barriers research initiative announced by President Fenves in 2016. Bridging Barriers is designed to tackle some of the hardest questions in the natural and human-made world.

“I have been incredibly impressed by the interest and effort our faculty and researchers have devoted since Bridging Barriers began,” said Daniel Jaffe, vice president for research at UT Austin. “I look forward to working with and supporting them as they tackle these important issues.”

The university is providing initial research funding, project management and fundraising to support Planet Texas 2050 to pursue external funding from federal, state and private sources.

For more information about Bridging Barriers and the ideas that contributed to the research challenge themes, readers can visit: <https://research.utexas.edu/bb/>.

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